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SUBJECT: U.S.-IRELAND R&D PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED

¶1. On July 5, the Ambassador hosted at his residence the public launch of the U.S.-Ireland R&D Partnership, an initiative to foster collaboration among researchers in the United States, Ireland, and Northern Ireland in the target areas of diabetes, cystic fibrosis, avian flu/emerging respiratory infections, and nano and sensor technology. (The three jurisdictions established the R&D Partnership in 2005, but there had been no event to publicize the initiative until the Ambassador's function.) The launch brought together over 80 participants from government bodies, scientific agencies, academic institutions, and private firms in Ireland and Northern Ireland with a view to advertising opportunities for joint research and funding under the Partnership. In addition to the Ambassador, Micheal Martin, Irish Minister for Enterprise, Trade, and Employment, and Aideen McGinley, Northern Ireland Permanent Secretary for Employment and Learning, spoke at the event, as their departments are the counterpart agencies to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Science Foundation in leading the Partnership. Other key participants were representatives of InterTradeIreland, a North-South body established under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement to promote cross-border economic links, which serves as the Partnership's secretariat. The July 6 Irish Times reported on the event,

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noting that the initiative could yield significant potential health and economic benefits by bringing scientific innovations to the marketplace.

¶2. The event's speakers urged participants to encourage scientists from the three jurisdictions to collaborate on joint research proposals, which could then compete for funding, including from the U.S. side, through international peer reviews. The Ambassador commended as a model for cooperation a June 23 Dublin workshop on cystic fibrosis, which convened Irish, Northern Irish, and U.S. experts under the Partnership's auspices with the goal of generating joint research proposals by the autumn. The Ambassador also highlighted the Partnership's spillover benefits for all-island political interaction, and he acknowledged U.S. Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, National Institutes of Health Director Elias Zerhouni, and National Science Foundation Assistant Director Richard Buckius for their leadership of the initiative. Minister Martin said that Irish support for the Partnership reflected an overall Government commitment to research and national competitiveness, as further demonstrated by a recent euro 3.8 billion investment in a new Strategy for Science, Technology, and Innovation. Permanent Secretary McGinley also focused on research funding, noting that money to be allocated under the R&D Partnership would supplement pounds sterling 44 million

in public funds for university research programs in Northern Ireland and pounds sterling 100 million in public/private investment in commercially focused R&D over recent years.

13. Comment: Post is aware of several ongoing U.S.-EU exchanges on nanotechnology, in keeping with this year's and last year's U.S.-EU Summit statements on the potential benefits of trans-Atlantic cooperation in this field. Post would encourage Washington agencies to see the U.S.-Ireland R&D Partnership as another available vehicle for U.S.-EU collaboration on nanotechnology, one of the initiative's five target areas. We understand that the nanotechnology committee under the R&D Partnership, which includes the National Science Foundation and its academic partners, is planning a workshop in October. We aim to urge this gathering to include EU observers from outside Ireland.

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